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# Yes, You Need to Upgrade to Drupal 9.

HERE'S WHY, HOW, AND HOW TO EXPLAIN IT TO YOUR STAKEHOLDERS.

- Drupal 7 and Drupal 8 end-of-life is approaching. The time upgrade is now.
- You must upgrade from Drupal 8 to Drupal 9 by November 2021.
- Drupal 7 community support ends November 2022. Upgrading from Drupal 7 to Drupal 9 will be more like a rebuild than an upgrade, in terms of time and budget.
- The complexity of your website will determine the cost of your upgrade.

# Why Should You Upgrade to Drupal 9 Now?

Well, you could stay on Drupal 7 or Drupal 8 even though they are going end-of-life (EOL). But that isn't a good idea because it opens you up to security risks and technical failures. The time to make the switch before losing official support is running out. Drupal 8 will be supported by the Drupal community until November 2, 2021, and Drupal 7 will be supported by the Drupal community until November 28, 2022. Keeping your site on either version of Drupal past its end-of-life date opens your organization up to security and functionality risks.

That's because versions of Twig, Symfony, and PHP7—technologies part of Drupal 8—are reaching their end-of-life, forcing D8 into end-of-life. The good news is that even though you have less time to upgrade your Drupal 8 site, upgrading from Drupal 8 to Drupal 9 should be pretty straightforward. If you're on Drupal 7, don't let that November 2022 date fool you. Depending on the complexity of your site, upgrading from Drupal 7 to Drupal 9 could be a complicated process. Everyone has to do this, so there is going to be a surge in demand for developers who can complete the work as the date approaches. Starting now gives you more time to make sure your site is fully upgraded and running smoothly before the Drupal version you're using loses support.

To sum it up, **regardless of what you're on now, you should start the upgrade process soon** to ensure you have enough time to complete the upgrade before end-of-life.



## Advantages of Drupal 9

When you upgrade to Drupal 9, you're not only avoiding bad things, but you're also getting lots of good things. Here are some features Taoti's developers are looking forward to with Drupal 9:

- **Easier migrations and updates** Upgrading to previous Drupal versions felt more like totally recreating your site. While this upgrade might still be complex, future updates from Drupal 9 on will be much simpler and more efficient.
- **Improved user interface** If you have ever been frustrated by Drupal's user interface while trying to publish a page to your site, you can look forward to a more user-friendly CMS.
- **Exciting front-end possibilities** Drupal's API-First initiative makes your site more versatile and allows for better integrations, giving you more front-end freedom.

Check out our blog series on Drupal 9 features for even more reasons to be excited about your upgrade.



## Reasons to Upgrade



### Security

Failing to upgrade makes your site vulnerable.



### Functionality

Some of the technology you currently use is also reaching end-of-life. Upgrading will keep everything running smoothly.



### New Features

Drupal 9 includes many exciting new features, like an improved user interface for the CMS.

# How Much Will a Drupal 9 Upgrade Cost and How Long Will It Take?

The state of your current site will dictate how long and how expensive it is to upgrade. There is no easy answer, but we've tried to simplify it with some sample upgrade paths. First, you need to determine whether your site is standard or complex. Below are some examples of potential roadblocks that could complicate your upgrade. If you're using any of these, consider your site complex. The more you're using and the more custom they are, the more complex your site is.

## POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS

### External Functionality

- Third party and custom APIs (Google Maps, social media, etc.)
- Integrations (e.g., Salesforce, HubSpot, Insightly)
- Custom Search (e.g., SOLR, Google, SearchBlox)
- SSO (Single Sign On)
- Integration with email service/SMTP
- CDN integrations, like Cloudflare



## POTENTIAL ROADBLOCKS

### Internal Functionality

- Caching systems (Memcache, REDIS, and others)
- E-commerce
- Complex file or PDF library identity
- Complex administrative permissions
- Complex publishing workflows (multiple publishing states or revisioning)
- Reliance on discontinued Drupal practices like Drupal Panels or the Rules module
- Custom modules

# Drupal 8 to Drupal 9



Fortunately, most Drupal 8 to Drupal 9 upgrades will be fairly straightforward. Just keep in mind how quickly end-of-life is approaching. It's always better to get started sooner.

## Standard Drupal 8 Site

You can expect this upgrade to cost between \$5,000 and \$10,000. Though we can't guarantee a timeline without reviewing your site, we've upgraded a Drupal 8 site to Drupal 9 in four weeks. This will include the time for the upgrade, as well as project management and quality assurance.

**\$5,000 - \$10,000**

## Complex Drupal 8 Site

If you are using many of the functionalities on the potential roadblocks list—especially if you have customized them for your site—you should anticipate a budget of \$10,000 or more. In addition, this may be a good time to evaluate some user experience or administrative workflow challenges.

We recommend starting with a \$2,000 technical audit to assess the complexity of your site. This audit will help determine how long it will take and the total cost. There is no commitment to complete your upgrade after conducting the technical audit. The audit report is yours to keep and use to determine the best option for your organization.

**\$10,000 or more**

## Taoti's D8 to D9 Upgrade Process

Taoti has established a Drupal 8 to Drupal 9 upgrade process based on dozens of site audits and our experience so far upgrading our clients' sites. These are the steps we recommend:

1. Update Drupal and the modules used by the website so that they are fully up to date.
2. Disable any unused modules and check for redundant or unused code to make for a cleaner Drupal 9 codebase.
3. Audit all modules. Use the Drupal-Check module to scan and identify deprecated code in your codebase.
3. Install and run the Upgrade Status module, a GUI-based module used to check your existing modules' compatibility with Drupal 9.
4. Make sure the hosting infrastructure meets Drupal 9's requirements.
5. Create an audit report detailing:
  - Status of deprecated custom code
  - Module upgrade status
  - Evaluation of integrations or other unique site features
  - Go-forward plan with estimates for site upgrade
6. Begin site upgrade.

# Drupal 7 to Drupal 9



Regardless of how complex your site is, moving from D7 to D9 is going to feel more akin to rebuilding your site than a simple software upgrade. You'll need to rebuild page layouts, dynamic listings, and functionality (often powered by Drupal modules) in the Drupal 9 platform, in addition to migrating content.

## Standard Drupal 7 Site

In our experience, this development effort is 80-90% of your original build's level of effort. So, if you spent \$100,000 on your website redesign and development, it could take around \$60,000 to move to Drupal 9. Of course, this is a rough estimate that will depend on the complexity and size of your site.



## Complex Drupal 7 Site

As mentioned above, a standard Drupal 7 site requires 50-70% of your original build's level of effort. A more complex Drupal 7 site is going to put you on the high end of that range, and you may go beyond it. If your existing site has big issues, you may even consider if now is a good time to redesign the site altogether.

## Taoti's D7 to D9 Upgrade Process

Because this process is more complicated than the Drupal 8 to Drupal 9 upgrade, the steps are a bit more high-level. Each site's process will look different, but here is generally what we would do:

- Audit site structure and technology.
- Evaluate custom integrations and functionality.
- Create a site audit report with recommendations and estimations.

## Beyond the Upgrade: Making the Most of an Inevitable Expense

If you're still on Drupal 7, there's a good chance your site hasn't been updated in seven or more years. If that's the case for your organization, consider if now is a good time to make some bigger user experience and design improvements. You have to upgrade the site anyway. Why not spend a little bit extra to make some much-needed changes at the same time?

We estimate around 30% more budget to do a complete redesign of the look and feel of your site, along with the technology upgrade. At a minimum, we recommend:

- Conducting user testing for the existing site
- Verifying brand and messaging consistency between the site and the current state of your organization

## Drupal 7 Extended Security Support

If you see the Drupal to Drupal 9 cost and timeline and think, "there's no way my organization can get this done before November 2022," don't panic.

There will be commercial support of Drupal 7 until at least 2024, meaning commercial partners have agreed to work closely with the Drupal Security Committee to roll out patches and release updates.

This is good news; however, don't expect the same level of support provided for Drupal 7. Similar to Drupal 6 Long Term Support (LTS), these commercial partners will likely release updates for modules their paying clients are using and not for any old module out there.

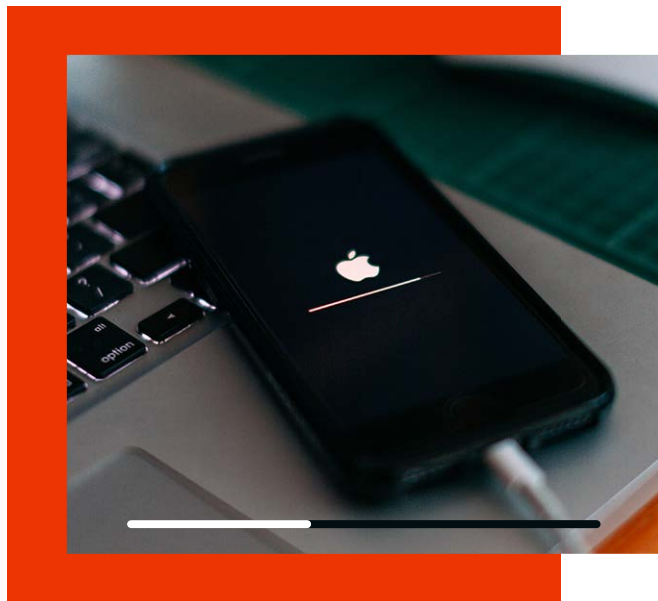
This means that the likelihood of you benefiting from these updates is high, so long as you are only using popular Drupal 7 modules. The more obscure your module, the less likely you are to receive any security updates for it.

# How to Explain It to Your Stakeholders

Now that you have the details and have a good idea of what you need to do for your site, here's a simple way to start the conversation with your stakeholders to get buy-in for starting the Drupal upgrade process soon.

## Think of an iPhone

Apple releases software updates all the time. Some of them are barely noticeable. Others totally change the interface and functionality. Eventually, Apple will stop supporting the software that your phone is able to run, and you'll have to buy a new phone.



## Upgrading from Drupal 7 to Drupal 9 is Like Buying a New iPhone

While your apps and data will transfer, it can be expensive and disruptive. You also have more decisions to make in terms of how you want to set up your new phone. The upside is that you're getting a faster and sleeker product than what you are used to, with two generations of enhancements and innovation.

## Upgrading from Drupal 8 to Drupal 9 is Similar to a Software Update

As long as you're not using anything too complex, it will be fairly simple for you. It's likely your users won't even notice. But you need to do it to get all the latest security updates, product features, and bug fixes.



# Taoti Creative is Your Drupal Development Agency **and Much More...**

Taoti has more than a decade of experience developing Drupal sites, and we are one of the few full-service agencies in the U.S. that can develop or upgrade your website and pair it with great design, UX, marketing, and communication strategies for your organization.

No matter what your site looks like or how complicated your upgrade might be, Taoti is ready to work with you to make your Drupal upgrade as seamless and successful as possible. Check out the case study below to see how one of our clients has already made the jump to Drupal 9.

**Ready to Upgrade?**  
Let's talk.

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## CASE STUDY

# Fairfax Water Drupal 9 Upgrade

Fairfax Water is responsible for providing nearly 2 million residents with safe, clean drinking water and sanitation services. Their website is the key touchpoint for most of their resident customers. Taoti Creative worked with Fairfax Water to redesign and develop their site on the Drupal 8 platform in 2017. With security at the forefront of all of their decision making, Fairfax Water was eager to get on the most current version of Drupal in the summer of 2020. Here's how we helped them:

## Technical Audit

Taoti Creative completed a full technical audit of the Fairfax Water website, including documenting:

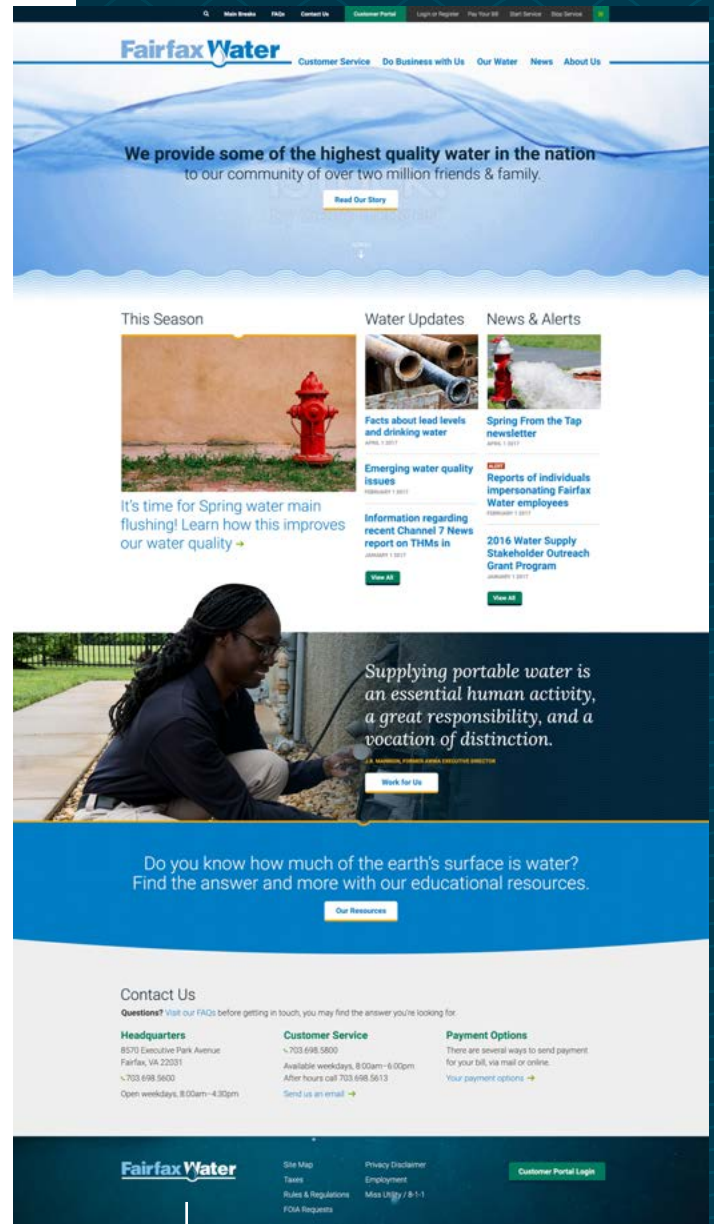
- Drupal page templates
- Drupal content types
- Drupal administrative roles and permissions
- Drupal modules and upgrade status
- Third-party integrations and external systems

We reviewed the 32 community-supported modules they were using and found:

- 28 modules were Drupal 9 compatible
- 4 modules needed minor updates
- 1 module was not Drupal 9 compatible

The Fairfax Water team ultimately deemed the non-compatible module to be non-essential. We also reviewed their three custom modules and found that all three needed minor fixes to become Drupal 9 compatible.

**Based on this detail, Taoti estimated the upgrade would cost around \$8,000.**





## The Upgrade Process

Taoti "forked" a version of the site and started our Drupal 8 to Drupal 9 upgrade process. Over four weeks, we upgraded the core of the site, upgraded each module, and performed quality assurance and testing. We then pulled over all remaining content before user acceptance testing. With an approved go-live, Taoti relaunched Fairfax Water on Drupal 9 with no downtime or issues.



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